

## Birds of a Feather...

The fact that Freemasons become united in a common bond was enough to ensure high lodge participation in early times, and even right up to the late 1950s. We now have difficulties in getting 20% of our lodge membership out to meetings. Keep in mind that preferably 14 officers are needed to conduct lodge, and when fewer than 25 brethren show up to a meeting, it's discouraging. In cases where one of those brethren is a new Mason, we leave a very poor impression.



In early times, lodge meetings had a very high “fraternal” content. One had an opportunity to find out what was going on in the “neighborhood” and learn about the situation with many friends and associates. This was sufficient to attract a high number of members to lodge.

With the advent of electronic media (television, Internet, email, Skype, hand-held communications devices) personal or physical contact became unnecessary. One can keep up with the “news” on television, and remain in contact with as many people he or she wishes virtually at the speed of light.

Is there a quick solution to this dilemma? The short answer is NO. It might be alleviated somewhat by lodges having “specialties.” In other words, a preponderance of lodge members interested in the same thing (photography, stamps, coins, and so forth). This is in effect with lodges that cater to certain professions or occupations (actors, police, military etc.). We are attracted to things that directly interest us and will be inclined to go to meetings where there will be men with the same interests (Birds of a Feather...)

There is still very high participation in recreational clubs (bowling, curling, golf, etc.) so people do “get out and about” if the attraction is there.

Might there be an “electronic” solution to a problem electronics created? Perhaps on-line lodge meetings? Here one would connect by his computer to a lodge session. He would watch the proceedings and be able to participate, essentially as though he were there. As to privacy (how do you lock the door?), a reasonable measure of security could be provided, but never 100% like a tyled lodge.

If the sessions were conducted as “open lodge meetings,” security is not a problem (lodge business is not conducted). Such would be valuable, as they would allow a measure of contact with probably 80% of members. Hopefully this would result in more members wanting to physically participate in lodge functions.